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## **Report on Possible Redecoration of CIA Headquarters**

**Comments Following First Walk-Through  
March 8, 1985**

## **Report on Possible Redecoration of CIA Headquarters**

### **Comments Following First Walk-Through**

I was asked to go through the present Headquarters building and consider whether the general decor should be changed since the colors were chosen some ten years ago. There has been criticism that the building interior appears dated, leaving the impression of an organization which is behind the times. A further consideration is the fact that the new building when completed will tend to emphasize any shabbiness.

Secondly, I was asked to suggest possible approaches to redecoration for consideration at the time the decision is made on whether to proceed.

#### **Present Situation**

Currently a color key is established in each elevator area for that section of the building with the key continued in a range of closely related door colors. This has been helpful in orienting people and in creating variety in a building with many long corridors. However, the contrast between the strong door and accent colors and the off-white walls, not only looks dated but has a harsh appearance. The colored doors are a step in the right direction, but still offices and hallways look monotonous. It may not be possible to completely overcome the sameness due to budget restraints, but the situation can be improved. In a building as large as this one, there is a need for as much variation as possible within a unified theme. People like the section they work in to be distinguished in some way from other areas. Surroundings seem less impersonal.

The library and some small projection rooms that have been redecorated recently are the most successful areas. In these the contrast between colors has been reduced and more texture is possible, making the atmosphere quieter and more pleasant. The large map graphics and textured wallcoverings added to a few elevator areas are successful also and should be incorporated in any renovation.

By making small controlled changes in both wall and door colors it would be possible to create a new relationship among the colors, giving the building a fresh appearance, while keeping the same color keys and the advantages of the present system.

In my opinion either this type of modification, or more extensive changes, should be done now when a large area of the building has to be renovated to accommodate changes in personnel, and when those changes can be coordinated with the new building. With a well thought out plan the changes can be implemented over a period of time as funds and convenience dictates.

It is important that the interior of the new building be considered when making any plan for the present building. This does not mean that the current building should in any way imitate the new one, but since they will be joined by major corridors, there should be a visual flow from one building to the other with the cafeteria also serving as a link between the two. Whoever plans the redecoration in the present building should confer with the individuals responsible for planning the interior of the new building and the renovation of the cafeteria. The relationship between the two buildings will be crucial in assuring that the current building retains its dignity and importance in relation to the new building.

### **Suggestions**

At important focus points, i.e., at the end of major corridors and end walls in the elevator areas, the theme colors are displayed painted on solid panels arranged in groups that act like a painting with the wall as background. These have begun to show their age, but more important they are inappropriate juxtaposed with the expensive and impressive paintings which are on loan to the agency. Instead of decoration as they were intended to be, they become by contrast cheap imitation paintings. These focal points need a treatment which is either equal to the paintings in visual interest, or is sufficiently different not to compete with the paintings.

The wall behind the portraits of past Directors should be painted, or have a wall covering, about the same value as the picture frames. This will make the frames look richer while at the same time draw attention to the pictures themselves.

Careful attention should be paid to the illumination for its color rendering properties, its costs, and as an important element in creating a sense of variety. An example of this can be seen in the reception area for one of the important offices where you approach down a hallway with a textured wall covering and fluorescent lights into a reception room that is illuminated with incandescent lamps. The waiting room looks warm and inviting as you approach it.

In one study where secretaries could adjust both the level and color of the illumination it was found that although there was not agreement on a preferred color temperature for the light and there was acceptance for a wide range of light levels, there was a preference for some variation in the illumination. In other words the people disliked flat lighting. Realtors when showing property turn on the lamps even in the daytime because the variation in illumination makes the house look more attractive.

Colors should be specified in a universal notation that is not dependent on a particular product or fashion name. Some colors, such as floor tiles and wall colors should have tight tolerances so floors and walls can be added to and replaced when necessary. Other colors, such as those used on upholstered chairs, carpets, etc., should have a wider tolerance, but that tolerance should be defined since variation in one direction in color space is often more acceptable than in another direction. As an example, a small variation in lightness may be more acceptable than an increase in greyness.

The decorator should work up groups of colors to be used in individual offices. These should be tied together by the same wall and floor colors; they should incorporate present office equipment and should include the door color as an accent color. There should be enough of these to give people some choice while still controlling the overall look. Offices for individuals with higher rank would have additional items, like carpets and wall covering, available but they should also be tied to the same color key.

Attached are some color samples showing a slightly darker version of the present wall color to be used in the corridors along with adjusted colors for the doors. In this suggestion the wall color inside the offices would remain as it is today so you would look from the halls into brighter appearing offices.

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